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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses fostering a sense of unity across multiple campuses of a community college. It defines multi-campus community colleges (M3C) as a community college district composed of more than one site where learning is to take place. Unity is considered the state at which the students, faculty, and staff on the various college campuses and sites have greater allegiance to the college than to the campus where most of their college experiences take place. Unity is the goal of many community colleges and can be illustrated through the hiring of college-wide personnel. Putting the college first and not having competition or animosity between campuses is oneness. The paper also addresses the question of how to make an M3C work effectively. The key ingredient of a successful M3C is communication. Everyone should desire and be able to acquire information about the many aspects of the college. To create cross-campus bonds, the college leadership must make an active and possibly intrusive effort to foster oneness. Teaching departments should be named and structured uniformly throughout the college. Students should be given activities, functions, and festivals throughout the year that are held at the various campuses. The paper looks at some problems of the M3C such as the lack of communication causing strife between campuses. Contains survey on multiple campus effectiveness and unity. (VWC)

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How Can Multi-Campus Community Colleges Hold on to a Sense of Unity and Oneness?

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HOW CAN MULTI-CAMPUS COMMUNITY COLLEGES HOLD ON TO A SENSE OF UNITY AND ONENESS?

Shawn Robinson
EDH6938
Dr. Kubala
Fall, 1996

What is a multi-campus community college?

Before getting too far into possible solutions to any dilemmas facing multi-campus community colleges (M3C), we must first know what one is. An M3C is a community college district that is composed of more than one site where learning is to take place. If a college holds classes at local public schools, churches, or in government or business facilities, then I shall refer to the college as a M3C. With this in mind, locations where dual enrollment takes place would be part of this configuration. The various campus sites are usually situated so that anyone in the service district is within a reasonable commute, within about 20 miles (California State Commission).

What is unity and oneness?

Throughout this paper, the terms unity and oneness will be used interchangeably. Unity will be considered the state at which the students, faculty, and staff on the various college campuses and sites have greater allegiance to the college than to the campus where most of their college experiences take place. Unity is the goal of many community colleges and can be illustrated through the hiring of college-wide personnel. When asked where a students takes classes, she should say "Valencia's East Campus" not just "East Campus." Putting the college first and not having competition or animosity between campuses is oneness. The goal of a college, with oneness, should be to envision the community college as a global entity not a locality.

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What makes an M3C work effectively?

The effective community college district is one that is intentional in its organization, planning, structuring of programs, treatment of students, and placement of sites and personnel. The M3C has do appear to a seamless organization from site to site. Everyone in the college should be willing and able to support the college totally. The key ingredient of a successful M3C is communication. Everyone should desire and be able to acquire information about the many aspects of the college. The faculty should participate on college-wide committees. The interaction between the members of these diverse bodies can increase the level of mutual support needed to get through tough situations (Kochersperger). Unified groups also have the ability to motivate and excite others to participate. The students should take classes and attend events at various college sites. There should be entertainment and athletic facilities on many of the campuses so that most students have easy access to performances and games if they so choose. The students should be encouraged to form and join college-wide clubs and organizations. Links between similar organizations on the various campuses would be beneficial. For these interactions to take place and create cross-campus bonds, the college leadership must make an active and possibly intrusive effort foster oneness.

The leadership can do this in several ways. Holding meetings, seminars, in-service training, and functions, that most faculty and staff would be interested in, at multiple times on the various campuses. This would give people the opportunity to engage in conversations with those stationed at other sites. Activities and functions held on the various campuses should be coordinated to achieve maximum interest and participation (Jones, 28). Colleges may wish to require new faculty to tour the various sites and attend college-wide training sessions. The

sessions would focus on the college and how its many components fit together. The theme of unity should be blatant and deliberately placed into all internal and external correspondence. To encourage greater participation, stipends and substitutes could be provided. Eventhough, funds are tight for most community colleges, the payoffs would be greater college morale and unity.

Teaching departments should be named and structured uniformly throughout the college. The analogous departments should hold joint meetings to discuss curricular issues, textbook adoption, and program and professional development issues. There could also College-wide Chair Councils formed that "share experiences, establish an identity within the administrative structure" for the purpose of strengthening the efforts college unity in mission and goals (Kochersperger). All efforts of departments to build closer cross-campus ties should be done in the open through collaboration. Teaching methods, philosophies, and materials should be encouraged to be consistent college-wide. The entire college should be "dancing to the beat" and share the college's vision, not secularize issues. The students taking classes at various campuses should have access to the similar learning experiences, offices, and information anywhere in the college. The campus bookstores should carry essentially the same materials, so that students and faculty can be get necessary supplies anywhere.

The students should be given activities, functions, and festivals throughout the year that are held at the various campuses. Valencia Community College holds an annual Matador Day festival. Although classes are canceled during the hours of the festival and those attending usually have fun, many students and personnel avoid the event. There must be greater incentive and reason to attend. Giving students points in classes as regular or extra credit for attendance might work. The

carrot of "extra credit" tends to work better with students than "required work." Teaching departments, student clubs, and administrative divisions could be enrolled to set up booths and events for the festival participants.With the technology available through closed-circuit and satellites, meetings and functions occurring on other campuses could be sent throughout the college as it occurs. Interactive technologies could also be utilized to hold college-wide meetings without leaving the home campus. The college could create or expand current usage of its media capabilities. A college-wide TV station could be used to distribute information to classes and those in areas with monitors. The college newspaper should have branch offices at each site with students from all locations submitted contributions for inclusion. Keeping in mind that the main reason for creating a M3C is to give the community greater access to affordable education, oneness can primarily be achieved when the college community looks beyond the individual classroom and a particular site.

What are some problems of the M3C?

As was noted earlier, the key to success is communication. Therefore the main cause of strife between campuses is the lack of communication. Often students think of college as the site that their classes are usually taken. Students come to class and leave the college immediately after class ends. Not being on campus for more than the required course time keeps students from getting the complete college experience. Students that are involved in campus or college activities tend to increase levels of involvement, their grades, and chances for matriculation (Frost). This problem is common to most commuter schools. When students aren't enticed or required to get involved, the one that would benefit the most don't take advantage of the college

resources until its too late, if at all.

The faculty also may be guilty to only functioning on one campus. s sometimes can get great exposure to the entire college, because they may volunteer to teach at various locations more quickly than the full-time faculty. Most s don't see participating out-of-class events as part of their job requirements. With no required office hours and no supplemental pay for outside involvement, the average would not get involved. If chairs and full-time faculty do not advocate for adjuncts (Kochersperger), then they will continue to be "out of the loop." The full-time faculty can often get very busy with situations that a campus-based that little time is left to branch out to other campuses.

The placement of the college CEO on a particular campus may spark a sense of superiority of one campus to the others. The non-neutral president's office could be a potential cause of favoritism. The campus heads may also be guilty of trying to outshine or putdown the other campuses. The campus heads that hold little college-wide responsibilities may end up promoting the effective separation of the college into many functioning colleges with their own agendas and visions.

Even though a healthy tension between campuses usually exists, unity can be jeopardized. This is because the campuses try for a uniqueness and autonomy just as an entire college might want to be distinguished from other colleges (Jones, 23). This desire for uniqueness can be seen as balking the college in favor of campus as superior to the college. This is very similar to conflict between the states and the federal government over states's rights.

The efforts to work in college-wide departments can be seen as a threat to the power of some upper-level administrators (Kochersperger). The administrator may feel as the departments are "ganging up" to push through policies and agendas that he or she does not like. Stepping on toes is major problem with groups working together if information is not properly distributed about the group's intentions. Rumors, suspicion, and internal politics can kill the good efforts of these united groups.

Another threat to college oneness is the potential for the loss of campus-based initiatives. If the college seeks to have college-based projects and research, campus spawned ideas would most liking be competing for college attention and funding (Jones, 35). This would mean that some things would not happen and the campuses would seem less empowered to be creative and innovative.

There are also logistical problems to building unity. Distances between campuses can cause people to not want to travel. Lack of facilities on smaller campuses and centers may prohibit certain type of activities that draw students and personnel to the campus when not required to be there. Also, some of the smaller sites may not have high level administers easily accessible to trouble shoot and give guidance and direction (California State Commission).

CONCLUSION

Knowing that many community college students think of college as sitting in a classroom for finite amounts of time, there should be a desire on the part of the "powers-that-be" to make efforts to draw the students from their homes to school early and keep them there after classes

end. The word "community" should be emphasized from the time the student applies for admission to the time the student achieves his or her academic goals. The faculty must take an active interest in working on college-wide projects and share ideas to all that will listen.

The administration should visit and encourage visits to each campus during the academic year. The students, faculty, and staff should know that their leaders know value each person associated with the college. The leaders must also appear at college-wide events and focus efforts on how to better the entire system.

Unity can be seen in college-wide ceremonies, festivals, entertainment and sporting events, and meetings. All appropriate college individuals should be invited to each campus function that would be in their interest to attend. Without unity, the college will be many colleges with only a name in common.

SURVEY ON MULTIPLE CAMPUS EFFECTIVENESS AND UNITY

Created by Shawn Robinson

This survey is by no means scientific, but it may give general trends.

Please rate the college on each of the following areas/topics. Use the following scale:

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

1. I believe that the College is truly one college.

2. I would like to see more college-wide department meetings.

3. I would like to work on another campus next semester.

4. I would like to stay on the campus which I currently work.

5. I know five faculty/staff personnel on each of the campuses that I do not primarily work.

6. If meetings are on other campuses, I do not wish to attend them.

7. I attend student functions on other campuses regularly.

8. I have been to all of the college's campuses and centers.

9. I encourage students to take classes on other campuses.

10. I believe there exists no rivalry between campuses.

11. I want my campus to be the best.

12. I believe that faculty members are more campus-centered than college-centered.

13. I believe that staff members are more campus-centered than college-centered.

14. I believe that students are more campus-centered than college-centered.

15. I believe that my provost and campus-based administrators are more campus-centered than college-centered.

16. I believe that the College-wide administrators are more campus-centered than college-centered.

17. I believe that adjuncts feel more a part of the campus than the college.

18. I believe that full-timers feel more a part of the campus than the college.

19. I know how to get support for my programs and ideas.

20. I believe that the student newspaper is unbiased in the college-wide reporting of information/news.